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(54) **VISUAL PROSTHESIS**

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**WO-A-81/01512 DE-A- 4 424 753
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• **JESINGER R A ET AL: "FLEXIBLE ELECTRODE
ARRAY FOR RETINAL STIMULATION"
PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
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SOCIETY, PARIS, OCT. 29 - NOV. 1, 1992, vol. 6,
no. CONF. 14, 29 October 1992 (1992-10-29), page
2393, XP000346990 MORUCCI J P; PLONSEY R;
COATRIEUX J L; SWAMY LAXMINARAYAN**

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Description

Technical Field Of The Invention

[0001] This invention relates to medical ocular devices and a visual prosthesis suitable for intraocular electrical retinal stimulation for phosphene generation in a visual prosthesis device.

Background of The Invention

[0002] In 1755 LeRoy passed the discharge of a Leyden jar through the orbit of a man who was blind from cataract and the patient saw "flames passing rapidly downwards." Ever since, there has been a fascination with electrically elicited visual perception. The general concepts of electrical stimulation of retinal cells to produce these flashes of light or phosphenes has been known for quite some time. Based on these general principles, some early attempts at devising a prosthesis for aiding the visually impaired have included attaching electrodes to the head or eyelids of patients. While some of these early attempts met with some limited success, these early prosthesis devices were large, bulky and could not produce adequate simulated vision to truly aid the visually impaired.

[0003] As intraocular surgical techniques advanced, however, it became possible to apply a more focused stimulation on small groups and even on individual retinal cells to generate focused phosphenes through devices implanted within the eye itself. This has sparked renewed interest in developing methods and apparatuses to aid the visually impaired. Specifically, great effort has been expended in the area of intraocular retinal prosthesis devices in an effort to devices implanted within the eye itself. This has sparked renewed interest in developing methods and apparatuses to aid the visually impaired. Specifically, great effort has been expended in the area of intraocular retinal prosthesis devices in an effort to restore vision in cases where blindness is caused by photoreceptor degenerative retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa and age related macular degeneration which affect millions of people worldwide.

[0004] One such device is described in U.S. Patent No. 4,628,933, issued to Michelson on December 16, 1986, for a METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR VISUAL PROSTHESIS. The Michelson '933 apparatus includes an array of photosensitive devices on its surface which are connected to a plurality of electrodes positioned on the opposite surface of the device to stimulate the retina. These electrodes are disposed to form an array similar to a "bed of nails" having conductors which impinge directly on the retina to stimulate the retinal cells. The Michelson '933 device is powered by a separate circuit through electromagnetic or radio frequency induction. To receive this energy, an inductor is included with the Michelson '933 device either wound on the periphery of the device or formed on one of the surfaces through pho-

tolithographic circuit techniques. The induced signal is then rectified and filtered to power the circuit elements.

[0005] Such a device, however, increases the possibility of retinal trauma by the use of its "bed of nails" type electrodes which impinge directly on the retinal tissue. Additionally, by including the photosensitive elements be near or far sighted.

[0006] The Michelson '933 device is also limited by the physical size available within the ocular cavity. Since this cavity is small and since the device must be supported by the retinal tissue itself, the amount of image processing circuitry which can be included therein is limited. Furthermore, the amount of image processing circuitry is also limited by the power availability and utilization requirements within the ocular cavity. As a result of these limiting factors, the Michelson '933 device does not include any image processing circuitry other than common signal amplifiers which simply tune the responses to the frequency response bandwidth of the retinal neurons, to shape the output waveform in a charge-balanced square wave, and trim the voltage and current output to acceptable levels for the neurons.

[0007] SCHWARZ, M. ET AL.: 'Hardware Architecture of a Neural Net Based Retina Implant for Patients Suffering from Retinitis Pigmentosa' PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEURAL NETWORKS vol. 2, 03 June 1996-06 June 1996, WASHINGTON, D.C., USA, pages 653 - 659 discloses a visual prosthesis a visual prosthesis comprising means for perceiving a visual images wherein the specific disclosed visual signal communication means are - as far as they are suitable to be located within the body - mounted inside the eye (see telemetry receiver unit in Figures 1 and 5 and page 656, section 3).

Brief Summary of The Invention

[0008] In view of the above, it is therefore an object of the instant invention to overcome at least some of these and other known problems existing in the art. More particularly, it is an object of the instant invention to provide a new and improved visual prosthesis. Specifically, it is an object of the instant invention to provide a visual prosthesis which will at least partially restore vision in cases where blindness is caused by photoreceptor degenerative retinal diseases. It is a further objective of the instant invention to provide a visual prosthesis which provides a level of functional vision which will improve a patient's mobility and enable reading. Additionally, it is an object of the instant invention to provide such a visual prosthesis which can be worn during routine daily activities and which is aesthetically acceptable to the patient.

[0009] In view of these objectives, it is a feature of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention to provide both intra-ocular and extra-ocular components to maximize the visual quality produced and minimize the retinal effect caused by the visual prosthesis. It is a further feature of the instant invention to provide a means of transmitting

the visual signal of the perceived environment from the extra-ocular components to the intra-ocular components without physical contact therebetween. Additionally, it is a feature of the instant invention to extract the required power for the intra-ocular components from the visual signal without the need for a separate power signal transmission. Furthermore, it is a feature of the instant invention to provide a visual prosthesis whose intra-ocular electrodes do not pierce the retina.

[0010] Therefore, in accordance with the above objectives and features, it is an aspect of the instant invention to provide a visual prosthesis having an extra-ocular image capturing and encoding element, and a radio frequency based transmission element. It is a further aspect of the instant invention to provide an intra-ocular stimulating electrode on the surface of the retina. In accordance with another aspect of the instant invention, a radio frequency receiving, decoding, and demultiplexing element is provided to receive the radio frequency transmitted visual signals. An aspect of one embodiment of the instant invention includes providing the radio frequency receiving, decoding, and demultiplexing element intra-ocular, while another aspect of another embodiment includes providing the radio frequency receiving, decoding, and demultiplexing element extra-ocular.

[0011] An embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention comprises a camera for converting a visual image to electrical impulses, image sampling circuitry for selecting an image at a given point in time, and encoder circuitry for encoding the selected image to allow a pixelized display of it. A signal corresponding to the selected image is then used to modulate a radio frequency carrier signal so that it can be transmitted into the eye by a tuned coil pair having a primary and a secondary coil.

[0012] A demodulator circuit is coupled to the secondary coil for extracting the visual signal output from the radio frequency carrier signal. A decoder is coupled to the demodulator for decoding the visual signal output into a plurality of individual stimulation control signals which are coupled to current generation circuitry which generates stimulation current signals in response. An electrode array has a plurality of electrodes which are operatively coupled to the current generation circuitry means. The electrodes stimulate the retinal tissue in response to these individual stimulation control signals.

[0013] These and other aims, objectives, and advantages of the invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description while taken into conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

[0014]

FIG. 1 is a simplified schematic block diagram of a visual prosthesis in accordance with an embodiment of the instant invention;

FIG. 2 is an expanded schematic block diagram of

visual acquiring, encoding, and radio frequency transmission components of an embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention;

FIG. 3 is an expanded schematic block diagram of radio frequency visual signal receiving, decoding, and retinal stimulation components of an embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention;

FIG. 4 is a simplified cross-sectional view of an alternate embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention as implanted within the eye;

FIG. 5 is a simplified cross-sectional view of a further alternate embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention as implanted within the eye;

FIG. 6 is a simplified schematic view of an intra-ocular stimulation electrode array in accordance with an aspect of an embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention;

FIG. 7 is a partial schematic view of a section of an intra-ocular stimulation electrode array illustrating attachment details thereof in accordance with an aspect of an embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention;

FIG. 8 is a partial schematic view of a section of an intra-ocular stimulation electrode array illustrating attachment details thereof in accordance with an aspect of an alternative embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention; and

FIG. 9 is a partial schematic view of a section of an intra-ocular stimulation electrode array illustrating attachment details thereof in accordance with an aspect of a further alternative embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention.

[0015] While the invention is susceptible of various modifications and alternative constructions, certain illustrative embodiments thereof have been shown in the drawings and will be described below in detail. It should be understood, however, that there is no intention to limit the invention to the specific forms disclosed, but on the contrary, the intention is to cover all modifications, as defined by the appended claims. The invention is defined in claim 1. Preferred embodiments are defined in the dependent claims 2-36.

Detailed Description Of The Preferred Embodiment

[0016] As discussed briefly above, the apparatus of the instant invention is a medical device which will at least partially restore vision in cases where blindness is caused by photoreceptor degenerative retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa and age related macular degeneration which affect millions of people worldwide. The partial restoration of vision is intended to improve the patient's mobility and enable at least large print reading, and thus provide an increased sense of independence. Briefly, visual perception is achieved by converting an image of the scene before the patient into a series of electrical pulses that are mapped onto the retina by elec-

trically stimulating the viable nerve cells beyond the dysfunctional photoreceptors. It is therefore a goal of the instant invention to provide a level of functional vision in a package that can be worn during routine daily activities and is aesthetically acceptable to the patient. The entire system of the instant invention is contained in a portable body worn package which functions without the use of implanted batteries or connector penetrations of the eye. The intraocular portions of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention are designed to be implanted in the patient's eye using standard ophthalmic surgical techniques.

[0017] Specifically, therefore, a visual prosthesis in accordance with the instant invention comprises a means for perceiving a visual image which produces a visual signal output in response thereto, a retinal tissue stimulation means adapted to be operatively attached to a retina of a user, and a wireless visual signal communication means for transmitting the visual signal output to the retinal tissue stimulation means. Preferably, the means for perceiving a visual image comprises a camera means for converting a visual image to electrical impulses, image sampling means coupled to the camera means for selecting an image at a given point in time, and encoder means coupled to the image sampling means for encoding the selected image to allow a pixelized display thereof.

[0018] Additionally, in a preferred embodiment of the instant invention, the retinal tissue stimulation means comprises a decoder means responsive to the visual signal output for decoding the visual signal output into a plurality of individual stimulation control signals, current generation circuitry means coupled to the decoder means and responsive to the plurality of individual stimulation control signals for generating stimulation current signals, and an electrode array having a plurality of electrodes operatively coupled to the current generation circuitry means. These electrodes are responsive to the individual stimulation control signals, and generate stimulation pulses sufficient to stimulate retinal tissue.

[0019] Furthermore, in a preferred embodiment of the instant invention, the electrode array further comprises attachment means adapted for attaching the electrode array to the retina of a user. In an embodiment, the electrode array defines at least one mounting aperture therein, and the attachment means comprises at least one retinal tack positioned within the at least one mounting aperture. Alternatively, the electrode array includes an outer surface edge defining at least two scalloped portions therein, and the attachment means comprises a retinal tack positioned within each of the scalloped portions. In a further alternate embodiment, the electrode array includes at least a first magnet attached thereto, and the attachment means comprises a second magnet adapted to be attached on the outside of the sclera of a user opposite a desired point of attachment of the electrode array on the retina. In yet a further embodiment, the attachment means comprises adhesive placed on a

surface of said electrode array to be attached to the retina.

[0020] In a further embodiment of the instant invention, the wireless visual signal communication means comprises a carrier generator means for generating a radio frequency carrier signal, a modulator means responsive to the radio frequency carrier signal and to the visual signal output for modulating the radio frequency carrier signal by the visual signal output, producing a radio frequency modulated image signal. Additionally, this embodiment includes a tuned coil pair having a primary and a secondary coil. The primary coil is operatively coupled to the modulator means to transmit the radio frequency modulated image signal. The secondary coil is tuned to receive the radio frequency modulated image signal. A demodulator means is coupled to the secondary coil for extracting the visual signal output from the radio frequency carrier signal.

[0021] A preferred embodiment of the instant invention further comprising power supply means coupled to the secondary coil for powering the retinal tissue stimulation means and the demodulator means. This is accomplished preferably by extracting energy from the radio frequency modulated image signal. The power supply means rectifies the radio frequency carrier signal from the radio frequency modulated image signal received by said secondary coil to produce the dc power output to power the retinal tissue stimulation means and the demodulator means.

[0022] A method of at least partially restoring vision to users who suffer from photoreceptor degenerative retinal conditions of the eye, therefore, comprises the steps of perceiving a visual image and producing a visual signal output in response thereto, wirelessly transmitting the visual signal output into the eye, and stimulating retinal tissue of the user in accordance with the visual signal output. The step of perceiving a visual image and producing a visual signal output in response thereto may comprise the steps of converting a visual image to electrical impulses, sampling the electrical impulses corresponding to an image at a given point in time, and encoding the selected image to allow a pixelized display thereof.

[0023] Additionally, the step of wirelessly transmitting the visual signal output into the eye may comprise the steps of generating a radio frequency carrier signal, modulating the radio frequency carrier signal by the visual signal output to produce a radio frequency modulated image signal, transmitting the radio frequency modulated image signal, receiving the radio frequency modulated image signal, and extracting the visual signal output from the radio frequency carrier signal. Moreover, the step of stimulating retinal tissue of the user in accordance with the visual signal output may comprise the steps of decoding the visual signal output into a plurality of individual stimulation control signals, generating stimulation current signals, and applying stimulation to the retinal tissue in accordance with the stimulation current signals.

[0024] In an exemplary embodiment of the above described invention illustrated in block diagram form in FIG. 1, a visual prosthetic device, illustrated as retinal prosthesis 10, includes an image capturing element, such as a standard charge coupled device (CCD) camera 12, whose visual signal output is processed and encoded in circuit block 14. This processed and encoded image signal is then transmitted via primary coil 16 as a radio frequency encoded image signal. A secondary coil 18 receives the radio frequency encoded image signal and passes it to the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block 20. This circuit block 20 then communicates the decoded image signal to an electrode array 22 which stimulates the retinal cells to produce phosphenes in a pattern to simulate vision.

[0025] It should be noted that the dashed line 24 in FIG. 1 is included to separate the image acquiring and transmitting portion 26 from the image receiving and stimulation portion 28 of the visual retinal prosthesis 10, and may or may not indicate the separation of the extra-ocular region from the intra-ocular region as will be described more fully below with reference to FIGs. 4-5. It should also be noted that while the figures illustrate the use of a CCD camera, the scope of the invention is not so limited but includes other technologies of image acquisition equipment such as video cameras, digital cameras, CMOS cameras, etc.

[0026] The image acquiring and transmitting portion 26 of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention is illustrated in greater detail in FIG. 2, and reference is now made thereto. As may be observed from this figure, the image signal captured by the camera 12 is output to an image sampler circuit 30, and this sampled image is passed to the pixel encoder 32. Once this sampled image signal is properly encoded, it is passed to the signal modulator 34 which uses it to modulate a radio frequency carrier signal generated by the carrier generator 36. This radio frequency modulated image signal is then transmitted via the primary coil 16.

[0027] The encoding scheme is optimized for the target image resolution which is determined by the size of the implanted electrode array, as discussed more fully below. The encoded information includes such parameters as the magnitude, timing, and sequence of the stimulation pulses which will be generated by the array to simulate the image through retinal stimulation. The modulation technique is consistent with the data rate, and maximizes the fidelity of the recovered information over the intended transmission path.

[0028] The radio frequency modulated image signal is received by the image receiving and stimulation portion 28 of the visual prosthesis, as illustrated in greater detail in FIG. 3. Once this signal is received by the secondary coil 18, it is passed to the demodulator 38 where the carrier signal is removed from the encoded image signal. The encoded image signal is then passed to a decoder/demultiplexer 40 which in turn outputs the image information to a current generator 42 which drives the indi-

vidual electrodes of the electrode array 22. The electric power for this image receiving and stimulation portion 28 of the visual prosthesis is derived from the energy contained in the carrier signal through rectifier 44. This carrier signal is rectified to provide the direct current to power the implanted electronics and generate the stimulation pulses. In this way a separate power transmission signal is not required.

[0029] The image receiving and simulation portion 28 of the visual prosthesis serves to demodulate and decode the stimulation information and generate the proper stimulation pulses which are transmitted to the electrode array 22 implanted on the retina. The decoded transmission is used to determine the characteristics of the stimulation pulse and where this pulse is applied on the electrode array 22. The pulses are transferred by means of a miniature ribbon cable 46 that lies within the intraocular cavity, or by other appropriate means such as, for example, fiberoptic cable.

[0030] The details of the attachment mechanisms for securing the electrode array 22 to the retina 50 will be described in detail below with reference to FIGs. 7-9.

[0031] In an embodiment of the instant invention illustrated in FIG. 4, the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry 20 is attached to the outside of the sclera 54. The attachment may be by suturing or other appropriate means. In this embodiment the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry 20 is placed in a hermetically sealed package and is coupled to the secondary coil by a small wire 56 which pierces the sclera 54. The small ribbon cable 46 coupling the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry 20 to the electrode array 22 mounted on the retina 50 also pierces the sclera 54.

[0032] In an alternate embodiment of the instant invention, as illustrated in FIG. 5, the secondary coil may also be attached to the sclera 54 instead of being implanted within the eye. As with the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry 20, the attachment of the secondary coil 18 to the sclera 54 may be by suturing or other appropriate means. In this way, only the small ribbon cable 46 which attaches the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry 20 to the electrode array 22 mounted on the retina 50 is required to pierce the sclera 54. The extra-ocular attachment of the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry 20 allows increased access to this circuitry which eases the replacement or updating of these components.

[0033] As discussed above, the electrode array 22, illustrated schematically in FIG. 6, is a biocompatible device which is mounted onto the surface of the retina near the fovea. This array 22 can either be a passive element that only serves to transfer the charge in the stimulation pulses to the retinal tissue, or an active network that can control the selection of the stimulation sites using information encoded in its input. The stimulation sites 58 in the array are spaced to provide a level of visual acuity consistent with the ability of the patient to discriminate the activation of adjacent sites. The stimulation sites 58 are composed of a material designed to maximize the

transfer of charge between the electrode and the surrounding tissue. While the array 22 illustrated in FIG. 6 has only a 5X5 array of stimulation sites, this number may be increased or decreased. If the size of the array 22 increases, it is preferable that the array 22 be flexible to allow surface contact with all appropriate areas of the retina. An electrode design which is compatible with electrode array 22 of the instant invention is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,109,844, issued to de Juan, Jr. et al. on May 5, 1992, for RETINAL MICROSTIMULMION,

[0034] The attachment of the electrode array to the surface of the retina is accomplished using any suitable method. In one embodiment illustrated in FIG. 7, a mechanical fixation device, such as titanium tack 60 commonly employed to aid in retinal re-attachment by holding the detached section of retina against the choroid, is used. The tack 60 is passed through a circular hole 62 in each corner of the body of the array 22 and holds the array in place by piercing the retina, choroid, and sclera. As an alternative to the tack 60, suturing may also serve as the mechanical fixation device.

[0035] In an alternate embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 8, the array may be secured to the retina by placing the tack 60 into a scalloped portion illustrated as a semicircular notch 64 in each corner of the array 22, and the resulting compression of the array 22 holds it in place. This method of attachment offers the advantage of easier replacement since the tack 60 does not penetrate the body of the array.

[0036] A less intrusive alternate method of attaching the array 22 to the retina is illustrated in the alternate embodiment of FIG. 9. This embodiment utilizes inert miniature rare earth magnets 66 which are embedded into each corner of the silicone array 22 during casting. A second set of magnets (not shown) are sewn onto the outside of the eye directly across from the desired position of the array 22. The magnetic attraction between the intraocular magnets 66 in the array 22 and the magnets sewn on the outside of the eye serves to hold the array 22 in place. This method obviates the need to pierce the eye wall with a tack and allows for easier replacement of the array.

[0037] An alternate embodiment of the instant invention utilizes a medically approved adhesive, such as cyanoacrylate or other appropriate adhesive, to secure the array to the retina. In this embodiment, the adhesive is applied to the edges of the array prior to its final placement on the retina. A temporary air pocket is then created in the vitreous to allow the adhesive to cure.

[0038] In a preferred embodiment of the visual prosthesis of the instant invention, the materials utilized in the components which are part of the retinal implant are those used in current day cochlear implants. It should be noted, however, that designation of such materials does not limit the scope of the invention as other, possibly better and more appropriate materials may be approved for intraocular implantation. In a preferred embodiment, the packaging for the implanted electronics is preferably ti-

tanium covered by silicone. The secondary coil is preferably made of platinum and also embedded in silicone. In this embodiment the electrode array is preferably composed of platinum wires within a silicone matrix. All of these materials have been approved by the FDA for intraocular use and exhibit proper electrical and biological characteristics for use in such a visual prosthesis.

[0039] Numerous modifications and alternative embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the foregoing description. Accordingly, this description is to be construed as illustrative only and is for the purpose of teaching those skilled in the art the best mode for carrying out the invention. The details of the structure and architecture may be varied substantially without departing from the scope of the invention, and the exclusive use of all modifications which come within the scope of the appended claims is reserved.

Claims

1. A visual prosthesis, comprising:

- a) means for perceiving a visual image, said means producing a visual signal output in response thereto;
- b) retinal tissue stimulation means comprising an electrode array (22) capable of stimulating retinal cells to produce phosphenes in a pattern to stimulate vision, said electrode array (22) adapted to be operatively attached to a retina of a user; and
- c) visual signal communication means for transmitting said visual signal output to said retinal tissue stimulation means, comprising a primary coil (16) for wirelessly transmitting a radio frequency encoded image signal and a secondary coil (18) for receiving the radio frequency encoded image signal transmitted via the primary coil (16), wherein

I. the electrode array (22) and the secondary coil are in communication via a decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) to which the radio frequency encoded image signal is passed from the secondary coil (18) and which communicates said signal to the electrode array (22) and wherein

II.

- a) the secondary coil (18) and the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) are suitable to be located on the body of the user outside a wall of the sclera, or
- b) the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) is suitable to be located

on the body of the user outside a wall of the sclera and the secondary coil (18) is suitable to be located behind the iris.

2. The visual prosthesis of claim 1, wherein said means for perceiving a visual image comprises:
 - camera means (12) for converting a visual image to electrical impulses;
 - image sampling means (30) coupled to said camera means for selecting an image at a given point in time; and
 - encoder means (32) coupled to said image sampling means for encoding said selected image to allow a pixelized display thereof.

3. The visual prosthesis of claim 1, wherein said retinal tissue stimulation means comprises:
 - decoder means (40) responsive to said visual signal output for decoding said visual signal output into a plurality of individual stimulation control signals;
 - current generation circuitry means (42) coupled to said decoder means and responsive to said plurality of individual stimulation control signals for generating stimulation current signals; both decoder means (40) and current generation circuitry means (42), included in the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) and said electrode array (22) having a plurality of electrodes operatively coupled to said current generation circuitry means, said electrodes being responsive to said individual stimulation control signals to generate stimulation pulses sufficient to stimulate retinal tissue.

4. The visual prosthesis of claim 3, said electrode array further comprising attachment means adapted for attaching said electrode array to the retina of a user.

5. The visual prosthesis of claim 4, wherein said electrode array defines at least one mounting aperture therein, and wherein said attachment means comprises at least one retinal tack positioned within said at least one mounting aperture.

6. The visual prosthesis of claim 4, wherein said electrode array includes an outer surface edge defining at least two scalloped portions therein, and wherein said attachment means comprises a retinal tack positioned within each of said scalloped portions.

7. The visual prosthesis of claim 4, wherein said electrode array includes at least a first magnet attached thereto, and wherein said attachment means comprises a second magnet adapted to be attached on the outside of the sclera of a user opposite a desired

point of attachment of said electrode array on the retina.

8. The visual prosthesis of claim 4, wherein said attachment means comprises adhesive placed on a surface of said electrode array to be attached to the retina.

9. The visual prosthesis of claim 1, wherein said visual signal communication means comprises:
 - a carrier generator means (36) for generating a radio frequency carrier signal;
 - modulator means (34) responsive to said radio frequency carrier signal and to said visual signal output for modulating said radio frequency carrier signal by said visual signal output, said modulator means producing a radio frequency modulated image signal;
 - said primary coil (16) operatively coupled to said modulator means to transmit said radio frequency modulated image signal, said secondary coil (18) being tuned to receive said radio frequency modulated image signal; and
 - demodulator means (38) included in the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) coupled to said secondary coil for extracting said visual signal output from said radio frequency carrier signal.

10. The visual prosthesis of claim 9, further comprising power supply means (44) included in the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) coupled to said secondary coil for powering said retinal tissue stimulation means and said demodulator means by extracting energy from said radio frequency modulated image signal.

11. The visual prosthesis of claim 10, wherein said power supply means rectifies said radio frequency carrier signal from said radio frequency modulated image signal received by said secondary coil to produce a dc power output to power said retinal tissue stimulation means and said demodulator means.

12. The visual prosthesis of claim 1 wherein the visual prosthesis at least partially restores vision in users who suffer from photoreceptor degenerative conditions, and ; wherein the means for perceiving a visual image comprises:
 - camera means (12) for converting a visual image to electrical impulses;
 - image sampling means (30) coupled to said camera means for selecting an image at a given point in time; and
 - encoder means (32) coupled to said image sampling means for encoding said selected image

to allow a pixelized display thereof, said encoder means outputting a visual signal output; the visual signal communication means comprises:

a carrier generator means (36) for generating a radio frequency carrier signal; modulator means responsive to said radio frequency carrier signal and to said visual signal output for modulating said radio frequency carrier signal by said visual signal output, said modulator means (34) producing a radio frequency modulated image signal; said primary coil operatively coupled to said modulator means to transmit said radio frequency modulated image signal, said secondary coil being tuned to receive said radio frequency modulated image signal; demodulator means (38) included in the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20), suitable to be attached to the wall of the sclera coupled to said secondary coil for extracting said visual signal output from said radio frequency carrier signal; and the retinal tissue stimulation means comprises:

decoder means (40) coupled to said demodulator means and responsive to said visual signal output for decoding said visual signal output into a plurality of individual stimulation control signals; current generation circuitry means (42), suitable to be attached to the wall of the sclera coupled to said decoder means and responsive to said plurality of individual stimulation control signals for generating stimulation current signals, both (40) and (42) included in the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20);

and said electrode array (22) having a plurality of electrodes operatively coupled to said current generation circuitry means, said electrodes being responsive to said individual stimulation control signals to generate stimulation pulses sufficient to stimulate retinal tissue to generate phosphenes.

13. The medical device of claim 12, further comprising power supply means (44) coupled to said secondary coil for powering said demodulator means, said decoder means, and said current generation circuitry means by extracting energy from said radio frequency modulated image signal.

14. The medical device of claim 12, further comprising attachment means adapted for attaching said electrode array to retinal tissue of the user.

15. The medical device of claim 14, wherein said electrode array defines at least one mounting aperture therein, and wherein said attachment means comprises at least one retinal tack positioned within said at least one mounting aperture.

16. The medical device of claim 14, wherein said electrode array includes an outer surface edge defining at least two scalloped portions therein, and wherein said attachment means comprises a retinal tack positioned within each of said scalloped portions.

17. The medical device of claim 14, wherein said electrode array includes at least a first magnet attached thereto, and wherein said attachment means comprises a second magnet adapted to be attached on the outside of the sclera of a user opposite a desired point of attachment of said electrode array on the retina.

18. The medical device of claim 14, wherein said attachment means comprises adhesive placed on a surface of said electrode array to be attached to the retina.

19. The visual prosthesis of claim 1, wherein the visual signal communication means further includes a carrier generator means (36) for generating a radio frequency carrier signal; power supply means (44) included in the decoding and demultiplexing circuit block (20) coupled to said secondary coil for powering said retinal tissue stimulation means by extracting energy from said radio frequency carrier signal.

20. The visual prosthesis of claim 19, wherein said power supply means rectifies said radio frequency carrier signal received by said secondary coil to produce a dc power output to power said retinal tissue stimulation means.

21. The device of claim 1 or 12, wherein said retinal tissue stimulation means is a passive element.

22. The visual prosthesis of claim 3, wherein said decoder means (40) is comprised in the decoding/demultiplexing circuitry (20) implantable in the user outside a sclera of an eye.

23. The visual prosthesis of claim 3 or 22, wherein said decoder means (40) is comprised in a decoding and demultiplexing circuitry (20) that is placed in a hermetically sealed package.

24. The visual prosthesis of claim 23 further comprising

a small ribbon cable (46) connecting the electrode array to the decoding and demultiplexing circuitry (20), said small ribbon cable piercing a sclera of an eye.

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25. The visual prosthesis of claim 23, wherein said hermetically sealed package is comprised of titanium covered by silicone.

26. The device of claim 3 or 12, wherein said electrode array is comprised of platinum conductors in a silicone matrix.

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27. The device of claim 4 or 16, wherein said attachment means comprises at least one titanium tack.

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28. The device of claim 9 or 12, wherein said primary coil is located in a soft contact lens.

29. The device of claim 9 or 12, wherein said secondary coil is comprised of platinum.

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30. The device of claim 9 or 12, wherein said secondary coil is comprised of platinum and embedded in silicone.

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31. The device of claim 1, further comprising one or more conductors piercing at least a portion of the sclera and coupling a receiving portion of the visual signal communication means with said retinal tissue stimulation means.

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Patentansprüche

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1. Eine visuelle Prothese, umfassend:

a) ein Mittel zum Wahrnehmen eines visuellen Bildes, wobei besagtes Mittel eine visuelle Signalausgabe als Antwort darauf erzeugt;
b) ein Retina-Gewebe-Stimulations-Mittel umfassend ein Elektroden-Array (22), das in der Lage ist, Retinazellen zu stimulieren, um Lichterscheinungen in einem Muster zu erzeugen, um Sehen zu stimulieren, wobei besagtes Elektroden-Array (22) adaptiert ist, um operativ an die Retina eines Nutzers angeheftet zu sein; und
c) ein visuelles Signal-Kommunikations-Mittel zum Übertragen besagter visueller Signalausgabe an besagtes Retina-Gewebe-Stimulations-Mittel, umfassend eine primäre Spule (16) zum drahtlosen Übertragen eines Radio-Frequenz-kodierten Bildsignals, sowie eine sekundäre Spule (18) zum Empfangen des Radio-Frequenz-kodierten Bildsignals, übertragen über die primäre Spule (16), wobei

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I. das Elektroden-Array (22) und die sekun-

däre Spule in Kommunikation über einen dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20) sind, zu welchem das Radio-Frequenzkodierte Bildsignal von der sekundäre Spule (18) geleitet wird und welcher besagtes Signal an das Elektroden-Array (22) kommuniziert, und wobei II.

a) die sekundäre Spule (18) und der dekodierende entschachtelnde Schaltkreisblock (20) geeignet sind, innerhalb des Körpers des Nutzers außerhalb einer Wand der Sklera lokalisiert zu sein, oder

b) der dekodierende und entschachtelnde Schaltkreisblock (20) geeignet ist, am Körper des Nutzers außerhalb einer Wand der Sklera lokalisiert zu sein und die sekundäre Spule (18) geeignet ist, hinter der Iris lokalisiert zu sein.

2. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 1, wobei besagtes Mittel zum Empfangen des visuellen Bildes folgendes umfasst:

ein Kamera-Mittel (12) zum Umwandeln eines visuellen Bildes in elektrische Impulse; ein bildabfragende Mittel (30), gekoppelt an besagtes Kamera-Mittel, zum Auswählen eines Bildes zu einem gegebenen Zeitpunkt; und ein kodierendes Mittel (32), gekoppelt an besagtes bildabfragendes Mittel zum Kodieren von besagtem Bild, um eine pixelierte Darstellung davon zu ermöglichen.

3. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 1, wobei besagtes Retina-Gewebe-Stimulations-Mittel folgendes umfasst:

ein Decoder-Mittel (40), antwortend auf besagte visuelle Signalausgabe, zum Dekodieren von besagter visueller Signalausgabe in eine Vielzahl von individuellen Stimulations-Steuersignalen; ein Stromerzeugungs-Stromkreis-Mittel (42), gekoppelt an besagte Decoder-Mittel, und antwortend auf besagte Vielzahl von individuellen Stimulations-Steuersignalen zum Erzeugen von Stimulationsstrom-Signalen; wobei sowohl das Decoder-Mittel (40) als auch das Stromerzeugungs-Stromkreis-Mittel (42) in dem dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20) enthalten sind, und besagtes Elektrodenarray (22) eine Vielzahl von Elektroden aufweist, die operativ an besagtes stromerzeugendes Schaltkreis-Mittel gekoppelt

ist, wobei besagte Elektroden auf besagtes Stimulationskontroll-Signale antworten, um Stimulationspulse zu erzeugen, welche hinreichend sind, Retinagewebe zu stimulieren.

4. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 3, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray des weiteren ein Anheft-Mittel umfasst, adaptiert zum Anheften von besagtem Elektrodenarray an die Retina eines Nutzers.

5. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 4, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray zumindest eine Halterungsöffnung darin definiert und wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel zumindest einen Retinastift, positioniert innerhalb von besagter mindestens einer Halterungsöffnung aufweist.

6. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 4, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray eine äußere Oberflächenkante einschließt, welche zumindest zwei muschelförmige Teile darin einschließt, und wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel einen Retinastift, positioniert innerhalb einer jeder dieser Muschelportionen umfasst.

7. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 4, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray zumindest einen ersten Magnet angeheftet daran enthält, und wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel einen zweiten Magnet umfasst, welcher adaptiert ist, um außerhalb der Sklera eines Nutzers gegenüberliegend eines gewünschten Anheftpunktes von besagtem Elektrodenarray auf der Retina zu liegen.

8. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 4, wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel einen Kleber, platziert auf der Oberfläche besagtem Elektrodenarray zum Anheften an der Retina umfasst.

9. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 1, wobei besagtes visuelles Signal-Kommunikations-Mittel folgendes umfasst:

ein Träger-Generator-Mittel (36) zum Erzeugen eines Radiofrequenzträger-Signals;
ein Modulator-Mittel (34), welches auf besagtes Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal und auf besagte visuelle Signal-Ausgabe zum Modulieren von besagtem Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal durch besagte visuelle Signalausgabe antwortet, wobei besagtes Modulator-Mittel ein frequenzmoduliertes Bildsignal erzeugt; wobei besagte primäre Spule (16) operativ gekoppelt ist an besagtes Modulator-Mittel, um besagtes Radio-Frequenz-moduliertes Bildsignal zu übertragen und besagte sekundäre Spule (18) getunt ist, um besagtes Radio-Frequenz-moduliertes Bildsignal zu empfangen; und ein Demodulator-Mittel (38), enthalten, in dem

dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20), gekoppelt an besagte sekundäre Spule zum Extrahieren von besagter visueller Signalausgabe von besagtem Radiofrequenzträger-Signal.

10. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 9, des weiteren umfassend ein Energieversorgungs-Mittel (44), eingeschlossen in dem dekodierenden und einen entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20), gekoppelt an besagte sekundäre Spule zum Betreiben besagten Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittels und besagten Demodulator-Mittels durch Extrahieren der Energie aus besagtem Radio-Frequenz-modulierten Bildsignal.

11. Die visuelle Prothese nach Anspruch 10, wobei besagtes Energieversorgungs-Mittel besagtes Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal aus besagtem Radio-Frequenz-modulierten Bildsignal, empfangen durch besagte sekundäre Spule gleichrichtet, um eine DC-Ausgabe zu erzeugen, um besagtes Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittel und besagtes Demodulator-Mittel zu betreiben.

12. Die visuelle Prothese nach Anspruch 1, wobei besagte visuelle Prothese zumindest teilweise das Sehen in Nutzern wiederherstellt, welche unter degenerativen Fotorezeptor-Bedingungen leiden und, wobei das Mittel zum Empfangen von einem visuellen Bild folgendes umfasst:

ein Kamera-Mittel (12) zum Umwandeln eines visuellen Bildes in elektrische Impulse;
ein bildabfragendes Mittel (30), gekoppelt an besagtes Kamera-Mittel, zum Auswählen eines Bildes zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt, und ein kodierendes Mittel (32), gekoppelt an besagte bildabfragende Mittel zum Kodieren besagten ausgewählten Signals, um eine pixelierte Darstellung davon zu ermöglichen, wobei besagtes kodierendes Mittel eine visuelle Signalausgabe liefert;
wobei das visuelle Signal-Kommunikations-Mittel folgendes umfasst:

ein Träger-Generator-Mittel (36) zum Erzeugen eines Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signals;
ein Modulator-Mittel (34), welches auf besagtes Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal antwortet und auf besagte visuelle Signal-Ausgabe zum Modulieren von besagtem Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal durch besagte visuelle Signalausgabe, wobei besagtes Modulator-Mittel ein Radio-Frequenz-moduliertes Bildsignal erzeugt;
besagte primäre Spule (16), die operativ ge-

- koppelt ist an besagtes Modulator-Mittel, um besagtes Radio-Frequenz-moduliertes Bildsignal zu übertragen und besagte sekundäre Spule (18), die getunt ist, um besagtes Radio-Frequenz-moduliertes Bildsignal zu empfangen; ein Demodulator-Mittel (38), enthalten in dem dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20), geeignet, an die Wand der Sklera angeheftet zu werden, gekoppelt an besagte sekundäre Spule, zum Extrahieren von besagter visueller Signalausgabe aus besagtem Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal; und wobei das Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittel folgendes umfasst:
- ein Decoder-Mittel (40), gekoppelt an besagte Demodulator-Mittel und antwortend auf besagte visuelle Signalausgabe, zum Dekodieren von besagter visueller Signalausgabe in eine Vielzahl von individuellen Stimulations-Steuer-Signalen; ein Stromerzeugungsstromkreis-Mittel (42), geeignet, an die Wand der Sklera angeheftet zu werden, gekoppelt an besagtes Decoder-Mittel und antwortend auf besagte Vielzahl von individuellen Stimulations-Steuer-Signalen, zum Erzeugen von Stimulationsstrom-Signalen, wobei sowohl (40) als auch (42) in dem dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20) eingeschlossen sind; und besagtes Elektrodenarray (22) eine Vielzahl von Elektroden aufweist, welche operativ an besagtes Stromerzeugungs-Schaltkreis-Mittel gekoppelt sind, wobei besagte Elektroden auf besagte individuelle Stimulationssteuer-Signale antworten, um Stimulationspulse zu erzeugen, welche hinreichend sind, das Retinagewebe zu stimulieren, um Lichtblitze zu erzeugen.
13. Das medizinische Gerät von Anspruch 12, des weiteren umfassend Energieversorgungs-Mittel (44), gekoppelt an besagte sekundäre Spule zum Betreiben von besagtem Demodulator-Mittel, besagtem Decoder-Mittel und besagtem Stromerzeugungs-Schaltkreis-Mittel durch Extrahieren von Energie aus besagtem Radiofrequenz-modulierten Bildsignal.
14. Das medizinische Gerät von Anspruch 12, des weiteren umfassend ein Anheft-Mittel, adaptiert zum Anheften von besagtem Elektrodenarray an Retinagewebe des Nutzers.
15. Das medizinische Gerät von Anspruch 14, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray zumindest eine Halterungsöffnung darin definiert, und wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel zumindest einen Retinastift, positioniert innerhalb von besagter einer Halterungsöffnung, umfasst.
16. Das medizinische Gerät von Anspruch 14, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray eine äußere Oberflächenkante enthält, welche zumindest zwei muschelförmige Abschnitte darin definiert, und wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel einen Retinastift, positioniert innerhalb von jeder von besagten muschelförmigen Abschnitten, enthält.
17. Das medizinische Gerät von Anspruch 14, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray zumindest einen ersten Magnet angeheftet daran einschließt, und wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel einen zweiten Magnet umfasst, adaptiert, um an die Außenseite der Sklera des Nutzers, gegenüberliegend einem gewünschten Punkt zum Anheften von besagtem Elektrodenarray auf der Retina angeheftet zu werden.
18. Das medizinische Gerät von Anspruch 14, wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel des weiteren einen Kleber, platziert auf der Oberfläche von besagtem Elektrodenarray, welches an der Retina angeheftet werden soll, umfasst.
19. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 1, wobei das visuelle Signalkommunikations-Mittel des weiteren einschließt:
- ein Trägergenerator-Mittel (36) zum Erzeugen eines Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signals; ein Energieversorgungs-Mittel (44), eingeschlossen in dem dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreisblock (20), gekoppelt an besagte sekundäre Spule zum Betreiben von besagtem Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittel durch Extrahieren von Energie aus besagtem Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal.
20. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 19, wobei besagtes Energieversorgungs-Mittel besagtes Radio-Frequenz-Träger-Signal, empfangen durch besagte sekundäre Spule, gleichtrichtet, um eine DC-Energieausgabe zu erzeugen, um besagte Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittel zu betreiben.
21. Das Gerät gemäß Anspruch 1 oder 12, wobei besagtes Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittel ein passives Element ist.
22. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 3, wobei besagtes Decoder-Mittel (40) in dem dekodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreis (20) umfasst ist, der implantierbar außerhalb einer Sklera eines Auges

im Nutzer ist

23. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 3 oder 22, wobei besagtes Decoder-Mittel (40) in einem decodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreis (20) umfasst ist, welche in einer hermetisch versiegelten Verpackung platziert ist. 5
24. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 23, des weiteren umfassend ein kleines Flachbandkabel (46), welches das Elektrodenarray mit dem decodierenden und entschachtelnden Schaltkreis (20) verbindet, wobei besagtes kleines Flachbandkabel eine Sklera eines Auges durchsticht. 10
25. Die visuelle Prothese von Anspruch 23, wobei die hermetisch versiegelten Verpackung Titan, bedeckt durch Silikon, umfasst. 15
26. Das Gerät von Anspruch 3 oder 12, wobei besagtes Elektrodenarray aus Platinleitern in einer Silikonmatrix besteht. 20
27. Das Gerät von Anspruch 4 oder 16, wobei besagtes Anheft-Mittel zumindest einen Titanstift umfasst. 25
28. Das Gerät nach Anspruch 9 oder 12, wobei besagte primäre Spule in einer weichen Kontaktlinse lokalisiert ist. 30
29. Das Gerät nach Anspruch 9 oder 12, wobei besagte sekundäre Spule aus Platin besteht. 35
30. Das Gerät von Anspruch 9 oder 12, wobei die besagte sekundäre Spule aus Platin besteht und in Silikon eingebettet ist. 40
31. Das Gerät gemäß Anspruch 1, des weiteren umfassend einen oder mehrere Leiter, welche zumindest einen Teil der Sklera durchstechen, und einen Empfängerabschnitt des visuellen Signalkommunikations-Mittels mit besagtem Retina-Gewebsstimulations-Mittel verbinden. 45

Revendications

1. Prothèse visuelle, comprenant :

- a) des moyens de perception d'une image visuelle, lesdits moyens produisant une sortie de signal visuel en réponse à celle-ci ; 50
- b) un moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale comprenant une rangée d'électrodes (22) pouvant stimuler des cellules de rétines pour produire des phosphènes selon un modèle pour stimuler la vision, ladite rangée d'électrodes (22) étant adaptée pour être reliée de manière fonction- 55

nelle à la rétine d'un utilisateur, et

c) des moyens de communication de signal visuel pour transmettre ladite sortie de signal visuel au dit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale, comprenant une bobine principale (16) pour transmettre sans fil un signal d'image encodé en fréquence radio et une bobine secondaire (18) pour recevoir le signal d'image encodé en fréquence radio par la bobine principale (16), dans laquelle :

- I. la rangée d'électrodes (22) et la bobine secondaire sont en communication par l'intermédiaire d'un bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) auquel est transmis le signal d'image encodé de fréquence radio à partir de la bobine secondaire (18) et qui communique ledit signal à ladite rangée d'électrodes (22) et dans laquelle
- II.

- a) la bobine secondaire (18) et le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) sont appropriés pour être situés sur le corps de l'utilisateur à l'extérieur d'une paroi sclérotique, ou
- b) le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) est approprié pour être situé sur le corps de l'utilisateur à l'extérieur d'une paroi sclérotique et la bobine secondaire (18) est appropriée pour être située derrière l'iris.

2. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle lesdits moyens de perception d'une image visuelle comprennent :

des moyens de caméra (12) pour convertir une image visuelle en des impulsions électriques ;
des moyens d'échantillonnage d'image (30) couplés aux dits moyens de caméra pour sélectionner une image à un point donné dans le temps ; et
des moyens d'encodage (32) couplés aux dits moyens d'échantillonnage d'image pour encoder ladite image sélectionnée afin de permettre un affichage pixelisé de celle-ci.

3. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle ledit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale comprend :

des moyens de décodage (40) réagissant à ladite sortie de signal visuel pour décoder ladite sortie de signal visuel en une pluralité de signaux de commande de stimulation individuels ;
des moyens de circuits de génération de courant

- (42) couplés aux dits moyens de décodage et réagissant à ladite pluralité de signaux de commande de stimulation individuels pour générer des signaux de courant de stimulation ; à la fois les moyens de décodage (40) et les moyens de circuits de génération de courant (42) étant compris dans le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20), et ladite rangée d'électrodes (22) ayant une pluralité d'électrodes couplées fonctionnellement aux dits moyens de circuits de génération de courant, lesdites électrodes réagissant aux dits signaux de commande de stimulation individuels pour générer des impulsions de stimulation suffisantes pour stimuler le tissu rétinale.
4. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 3, ladite rangée d'électrodes comprenant en outre des moyens d'attache adaptés pour attacher ladite rangée d'électrode à la rétine d'un utilisateur.
5. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 4, dans laquelle ladite rangée d'électrodes définit au moins une ouverture de fixation dans celle-ci et dans laquelle lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent au moins une attache rétinienne positionnée dans ladite au moins une ouverture de fixation.
6. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 4, dans laquelle ladite rangée d'électrodes comprend un bord de surface externe définissant au moins deux parties cannelées dans celui-ci et dans laquelle lesdits moyens d'attache définissent une attache rétinienne positionnée dans chacune desdites parties cannelées.
7. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 4, dans laquelle ladite rangée d'électrodes comprend au moins un premier aimant relié à celle-ci et dans laquelle lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent un second aimant adapté pour être attaché sur la partie extérieure sclérotique d'un utilisateur opposée à un point d'attache souhaité de ladite rangée d'électrodes sur la rétine.
8. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 4, dans laquelle lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent un adhésif placé sur une surface de ladite rangée d'électrodes devant être attachée à la rétine.
9. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle lesdits moyens de communication de signal visuel comprennent :
- un moyen de génération de porteuse (36) pour générer un signal porteur de fréquence radio ; des moyens de modulation (34) réagissant au dit signal porteur de fréquence radio et à ladite sortie de signal visuel pour moduler ledit signal porteur de fréquence radio par ladite sortie de signal visuel, lesdits moyens de modulation produisant un signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio ; ladite bobine principale (16) couplée de manière fonctionnelle aux dits moyens de modulation pour transmettre ledit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio, ladite bobine secondaire (18) étant réglée pour recevoir ledit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio ; et des moyens de démodulation (38) inclus dans le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) couplés à ladite bobine secondaire pour extraire ladite sortie de signal visuel dudit signal porteur de fréquence radio.
10. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 9, comprenant en outre des moyens d'alimentation électrique (44) inclus dans le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) couplés à ladite bobine secondaire pour alimenter ledit moyen de stimulation, de tissu rétinale et lesdits moyens de démodulation en extrayant de l'énergie à partir dudit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio.
11. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 10, dans laquelle lesdits moyens d'alimentation électrique redressent ledit signal porteur de fréquence radio à partir dudit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio reçu par ladite bobine secondaire pour produire une sortie de courant continu afin d'alimenter ledit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale et lesdits moyens de démodulation.
12. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle la prothèse visuelle rétablit au moins partiellement la vision d'utilisateurs souffrant d'états de cécité visuelle dégénérée et dans laquelle les moyens de perception d'une image visuelle comprennent :
- des moyens de caméra (12) pour convertir une image visuelle en des impulsions électriques ; des moyens d'échantillonnage d'image (30) couplés aux dits moyens de caméra pour sélectionner une image à un point donné dans le temps ; et des moyens d'encodage (32) couplés aux dits moyens d'échantillonnage d'image pour encoder ladite image sélectionnée afin de permettre un affichage pixelisé de celle-ci, lesdits moyens d'encodage fournissant en sortie une sortie de signal visuel ; les moyens de communication de signal visuel comprennent :
- un moyen de génération de porteuse (36) pour générer un signal porteur de fréquence

radio ;
 des moyens de modulation (34) réagissant au dit signal porteur de fréquence radio et à ladite sortie de signal visuel pour moduler ledit signal porteur de fréquence radio par ladite sortie de signal visuel, lesdits moyens de modulation (34) produisant un signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio ;
 ladite bobine principale couplée de manière fonctionnelle aux dits moyens de modulation pour transmettre ledit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio, ladite bobine secondaire (18) étant réglée pour recevoir ledit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio ; et
 des moyens de démodulation (38) inclus dans le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) appropriés pour être attachés à la paroi sclérotique couplée à ladite bobine secondaire pour extraire ladite sortie de signal visuel dudit signal porteur de fréquence radio ;
 et le moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale comprend :

des moyens de décodage (40) couplés aux dits moyens de démodulation et réagissant à ladite sortie de signal visuel pour décoder ladite sortie de signal visuel en une pluralité de signaux de commande de stimulation individuels ;
 des moyens de circuits de génération de courant (42) appropriés pour être attachés à la paroi sclérotique couplée aux dits moyens de décodage et réagissant à ladite pluralité de signaux de commande de stimulation individuels pour générer des signaux de courant de stimulation, à la fois les moyens (40) et (42) étant inclus dans le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) ;

et ladite rangée d'électrodes (22) ayant une pluralité d'électrodes couplées de manière fonctionnelle aux dits moyens de circuits de génération de courant, lesdites électrodes réagissant aux dits signaux de commande de stimulation individuels pour générer des impulsions de stimulation suffisantes pour stimuler le tissu rétinale afin de générer des phosphènes.

13. Dispositif médical selon la revendication 12, comprenant en outre des moyens d'alimentation électrique (44) couplés à ladite bobine secondaire pour alimenter lesdits moyens de démodulation, lesdits moyens de décodage et lesdits moyens de circuits

de génération de courant en retirant de l'énergie à partir dudit signal d'image modulée en fréquence radio.

14. Dispositif médical selon la revendication 12, comprenant en outre des moyens d'attache adaptés pour relier ladite rangée d'électrodes au dit tissu rétinale de l'utilisateur.

15. Dispositif médical selon la revendication 14, dans lequel ladite rangée d'électrodes définit au moins une ouverture de fixation dans celle-ci et dans lequel lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent au moins une attache rétinienne positionnée dans ladite au moins une ouverture de fixation.

16. Dispositif médical selon la revendication 14, dans lequel ladite rangée d'électrodes comprend un bord de surface externe définissant au moins deux parties cannelées dans celle-ci et dans lequel lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent une attache rétinienne positionnée dans chacune desdites parties cannelées.

17. Dispositif médical selon la revendication 14, dans lequel ladite rangée d'électrodes comprend au moins un premier aimant attaché à celle-ci et dans lequel lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent un second aimant adapté pour être attaché sur la partie extérieure sclérotique d'un utilisateur opposée à un point d'attache souhaité de ladite rangée d'électrodes sur la rétine.

18. Dispositif médical selon la revendication 14, dans lequel lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent un adhésif placé sur une surface de ladite rangée d'électrodes devant être attachée sur la rétine.

19. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle les moyens de communication de signal visuel comprennent en outre :

un moyen de génération de porteuse (36) pour générer un signal porteur de fréquence radio ;
 des moyens d'alimentation électrique (44) inclus dans le bloc de circuit de décodage et de démultiplexage (20) couplés à ladite bobine secondaire pour alimenter ledit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale en retirant de l'énergie à partir dudit signal porteur de fréquence radio ;

20. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 19, dans laquelle lesdits moyens d'alimentation électrique reçoivent ledit signal porteur de fréquence radio par ladite bobine secondaire pour produire une sortie de courant continu afin d'alimenter ledit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale.

21. Dispositif selon la revendication 1 ou 12, dans lequel ledit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale est un élément passif.
22. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 3, dans laquelle lesdits moyens de décodage (40) sont inclus dans l'ensemble de circuits de décodage/démultiplexage (20) pouvant être implantés dans la partie externe sclérotique de l'oeil d'un utilisateur. 5
10
23. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 3 ou la revendication 22, dans laquelle lesdits moyens de décodage (40) sont compris dans un ensemble de circuits de décodage/démultiplexage (20) qui est placé dans un paquet hermétiquement isolé. 15
24. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 23, comprenant en outre un câble ruban de petite dimension (46) reliant la rangée d'électrodes à l'ensemble de circuits de décodage et de démultiplexage (20), ledit câble ruban de petite dimension perçant la partie sclérotique d'un oeil. 20
25. Prothèse visuelle selon la revendication 23, dans laquelle ledit paquet hermétiquement isolé est constitué de titane recouvert de silicone. 25
26. Dispositif selon la revendication 3 ou la revendication '12, dans lequel ladite rangée d'électrodes est constituée de conducteurs en platine dans une matrice de silicone. 30
27. Dispositif selon la revendication 4 ou la revendication 16, dans lequel lesdits moyens d'attache comprennent au moins une attache en titane. 35
28. Dispositif selon la revendication 9 ou la revendication 12, dans lequel ladite bobine principale est située dans une lentille à contact souple. 40
29. Dispositif selon la revendication 9 ou la revendication 12, dans lequel ladite bobine secondaire est constituée de platine.
30. Dispositif selon la revendication 9 ou la revendication 12, dans lequel ladite bobine secondaire est constituée de platine et incorporée dans de la silicone. 45
31. Dispositif selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre un ou plusieurs conducteurs perçant au moins une partie de la partie sclérotique et couplant une partie de réception des moyens de communication de signal visuel au dit moyen de stimulation de tissu rétinale. 50
55

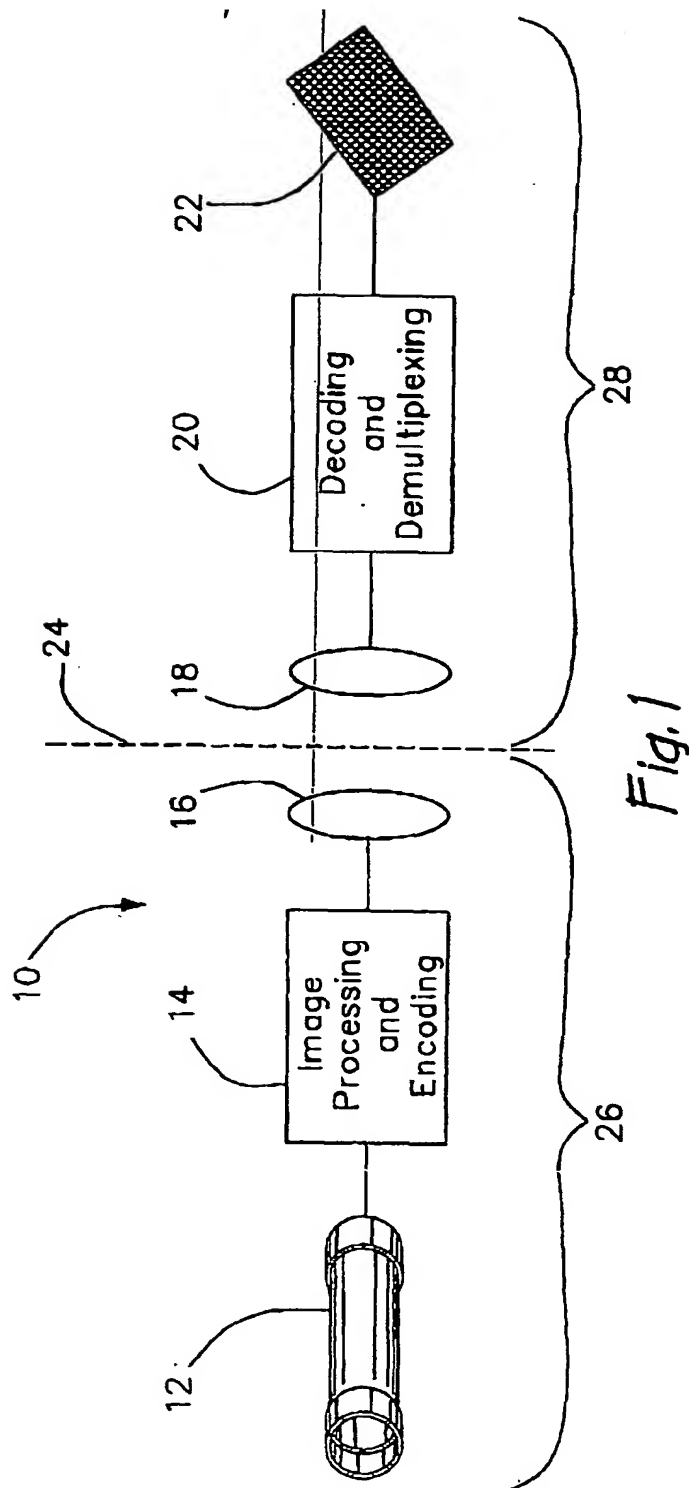


Fig. 1

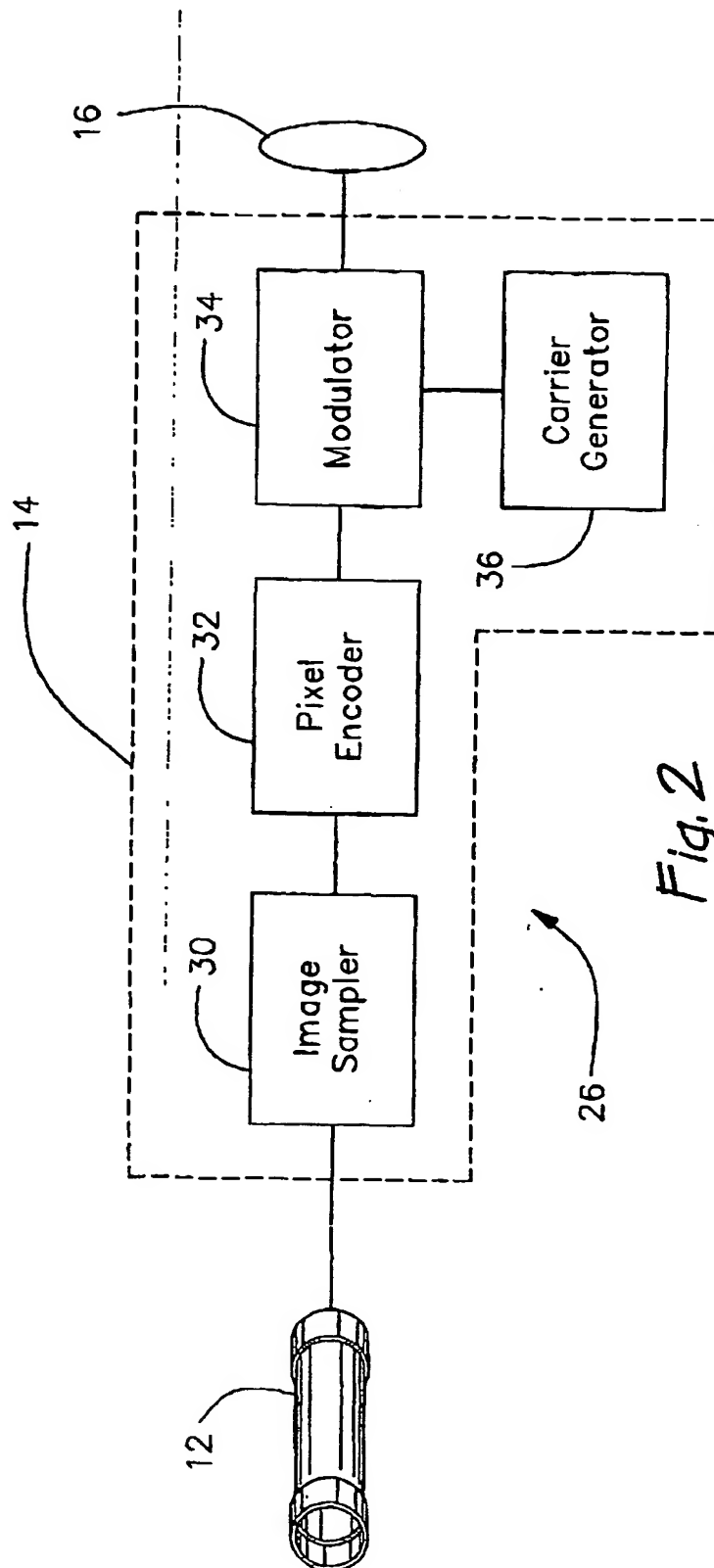


Fig. 2

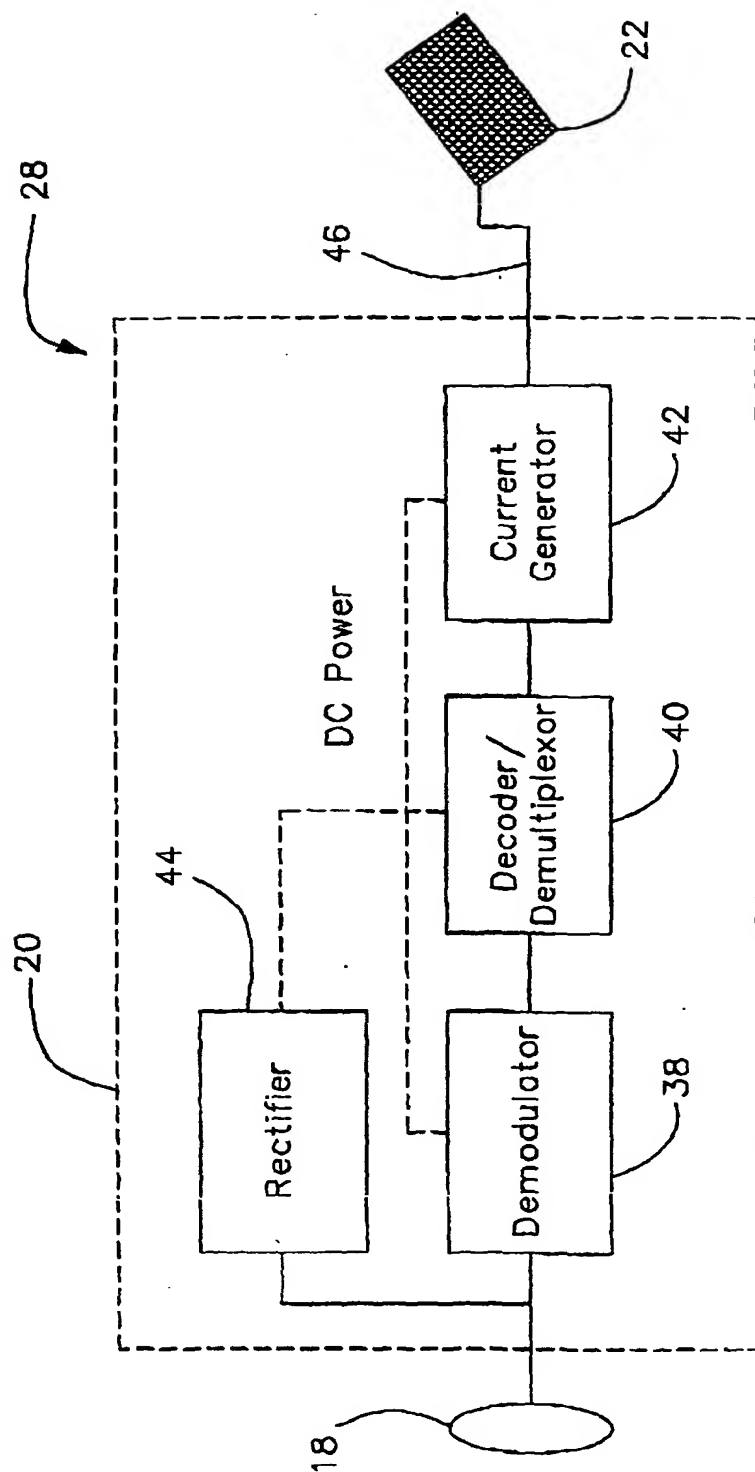


Fig. 3

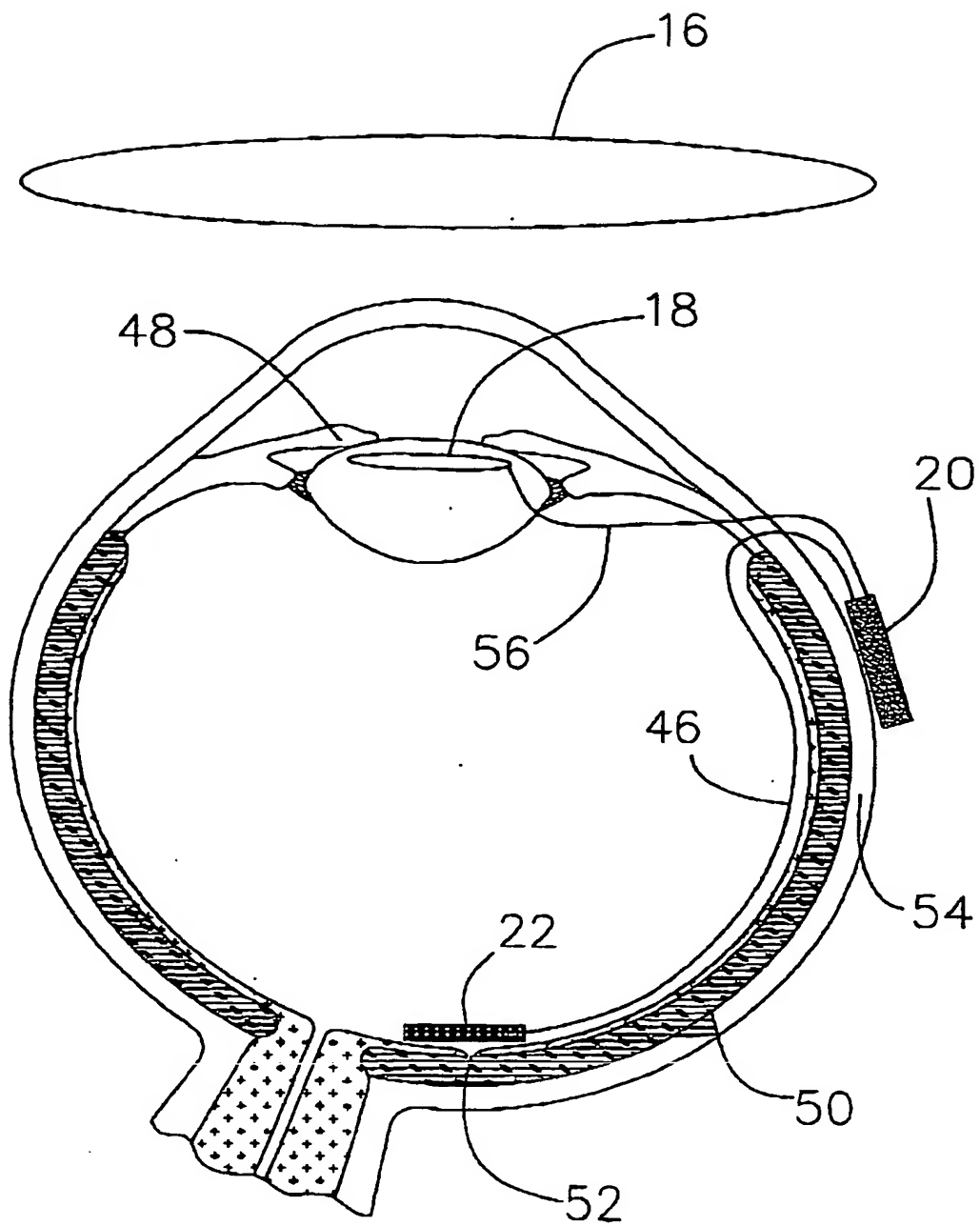


Fig. 4

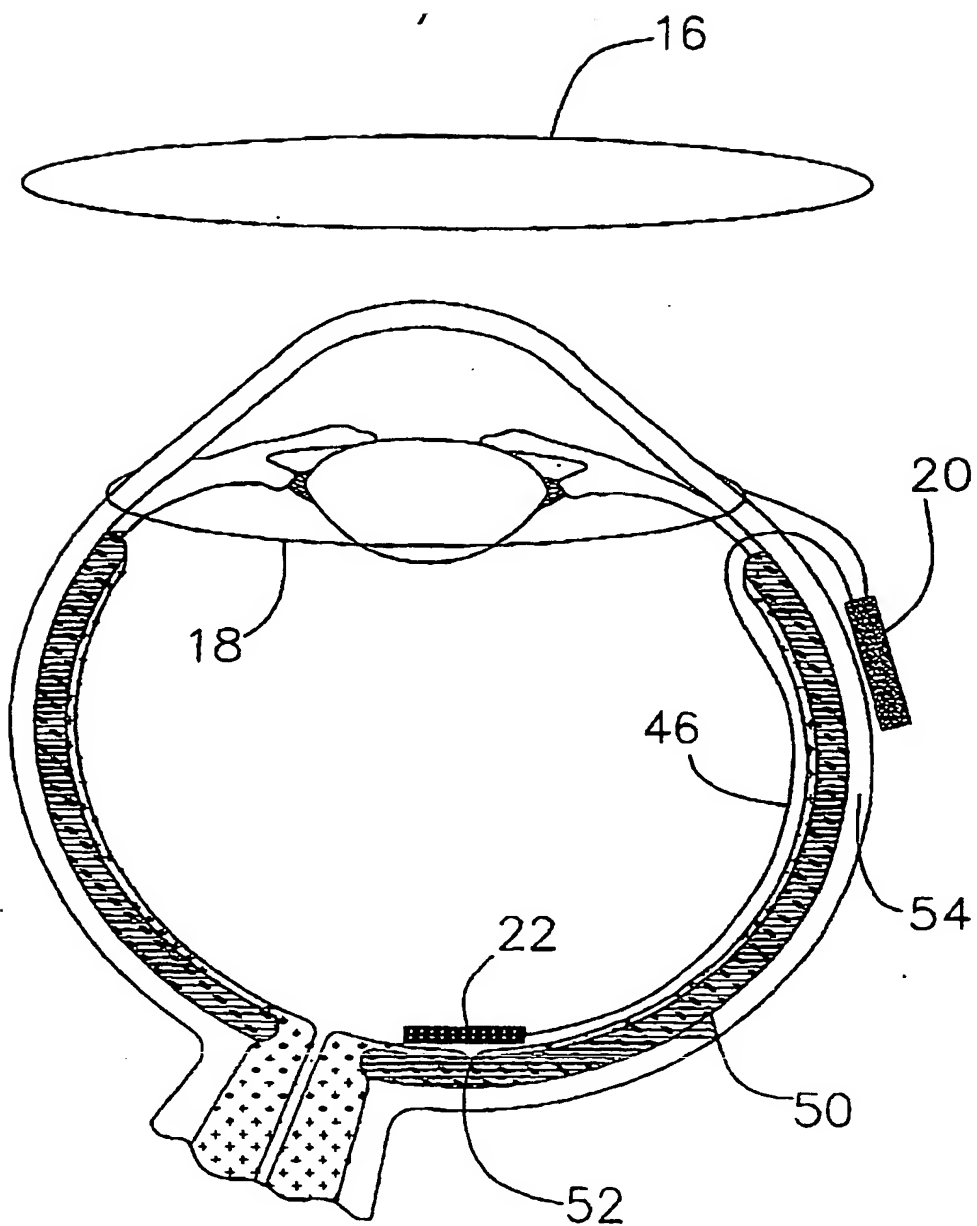


Fig. 65

